



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 108th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 150

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28, 2004

No. 7

Senate

The Senate met at 11 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray:

Eternal Spirit, who has set our noisy years in the heart of Your eternity, under the shadow of Your wings, we find gladness and peace. Thank You for Your watchful care over body and soul alike.

Lord, You have kept our eyes from tears and brought us solace in seasons of grief. Thank You for keeping our feet from falling, or if we fell, you refused to forsake us. You have forgiven our sins and healed our diseases.

Today, give all who labor for liberty Your wisdom. Help us to embrace the right priorities. Remind us that a person's success and greatness cannot keep him or her from death. Teach us, therefore, to sacrifice for those things that will live beyond our years. Use us to tell others about Your greatness. And, Lord, bless our military people who are in harm's way.

We pray this in Your righteous Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The PRESIDENT pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The acting majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, today the Senate will again resume de-

bate on H.R. 3108, the pension rate bill. Under the agreement reached yesterday, there will be 40 minutes of debate prior to disposing of the Kyl amendment No. 2236 regarding the general funding waiver. That amendment may not require a rollcall vote; therefore, we may be able to proceed to a vote on passage of the legislation prior to noon today.

In addition to completing the pension rate bill, the majority leader will be discussing with the Democratic leadership the possibility of a vote on a district judge nomination that has been available on the Executive Calendar. Therefore, additional votes may occur today and we will alert Members when that vote is confirmed.

For the remainder of the week, both sides of the aisle will be conducting retreats. Because of these important policy conferences, the Senate will be in pro forma session tomorrow, and we will be out of session on Friday. The leader will have more to say on next week's schedule at the close of business today.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I hope we can complete our work on the pension bill today. We have been on it now for, I think, 6 days. We have been getting good cooperation on both sides of the aisle. I don't see any reason why before we conclude our work this afternoon we cannot finish this bill. I appreciate very much the report of the assistant majority leader this morning.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

NATIONAL GUARDSMAN KENNETH HENDRICKSON

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, over the weekend, east of Fallujah, Iraq, a roadside bomb exploded, taking the life

of SSG Kenneth Hendrickson, a member of the National Guard 957th Multi-Role Bridge Company.

SSG Hendrickson is from Bismarck, ND, where he lived with his wife and son and near his mother Adeline. His father, Lyle Hendrickson, is now a Pendleton County commissioner in South Dakota.

Staff Sergeant Hendrickson was only 4 weeks away from returning home. Shortly before the attack that would take his life, his parents were told not to send anymore letters or care packages because he would be heading home before any other mail could reach him in Iraq.

Staff Sergeant Hendrickson served his country with courage. Every American owes him and the entire Hendrickson family a debt of thanks for his service, as well as his sacrifice. His death reminds us that nearly 150,000 of our sons and daughters still face danger in Iraq and Afghanistan, and that fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, and children still wait anxiously for their loved ones' safe return.

It reminds us, too, that more than 500 American soldiers have been lost since the Iraqi war began and about 3,000 have been wounded.

The families of South Dakota have borne a particularly heavy toll during this war. South Dakota has a higher proportion of its citizens serving the Guard in Iraq than any other State in the country right now.

There is nothing we can do to fully repay the men and women for their service. But in thanks for their commitment to our protection, we must commit ourselves to their protection as well. Our first responsibility is to give them every tool and technological advantage available to help them do their jobs and return home safely.

Regrettably, we have received numerous reports that the Defense Department is not doing all it can with regard to protecting our troops. From the very first deployments, we were

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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S293